

If the FCC continues on the permissive track it has been following, cable companies will grow larger and more profitable through consolidation. This consolidation is a clear violation of horizontal ownership rules and the FCC must re-establish those rule because the agency is mandated to serve the public interest - not the corporate interest.

The concentration of power and control over the distribution of the US media means that although citizens have more channels available to them, these channels do not provide customers with real viewing and information choices since the channels are under the control of a handful of giant corporations.

Now Comcast and Time Warner want to merge with Adelphia and that means that only TWO companies will control nearly 50 percent of our national market. It doesn't take a genius to understand that if the FCC allows this concentration of power within a few mega-corporations, the US consumer will suffer: higher consumer rates and lower quality service are the direct results of mergers such as the one proposed.

Since passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the "deregulation" of cable, consumers rates have increased by 59% (average). Yet fuller and better services and choices have not matched that increase. Customers are still required to buy channels that they do not want or

need, because the corporate providers continue to bundle channels - even in the face of direct information from customers that this standard operational procedure is not efficacious. This lack of concern for customers' wishes is one more sign pointing to the lack of competition in the cable market - and this closed non-competing market is being fostered and support by the FCC.

Many people do not have cable service because they cannot afford it - rural and low-income Americans don't often have access to cable services. The American people are watching the digital divide widen even as the need for access to high-speed networks increases.

The lack of responsive action by

the cable companies
intent on
consolidation is in
direct proportion to
to the needs and
requirements of
communities. The
quality of public
accountability in
local franchise
agreements has
declined, as big
companies leverage
their power to
squeeze local
governments. And in
those communities
that have truly
independent sources
for local news, the
best sources of
information and
culture are coming
from the public
channels produced at
the local access
centers. Pressure
from the large
corporations and
falling budget
dollars mean that
local channels are
suffering from a
lack of opportunity
and a lack of
resources to produce
the programming that
citizens want and
need.

I am tired of the behavior of government agencies in the last five years. I am particularly appalled by the behavior of the FCC which has given way to industry on every issue of importance.

The last thing our nation needs is to reward the anti-competitive actions of cable giants by permitting greater consolidation in ownership, reducing competition, and encouraging more of the same. But citizens may rest assured - the FCC will give these corporations precisely what they demand - that is the track record of an agency that is supposed to be the watchdog for citizens.

I am old enough to remember a time when public officials and

agencies took their responsibilities to citizens seriously and genuinely worked to protect the American consumer, but times have changes: the only true American citizen is the corporation - at least that is the message that the FCC sends to citizens each day.

It would be nice to see the FCC make an effort to regain the trust of the public and to perform its assigned duties and protect the airwaves of this nation, but I have no faith that the FCC will do that. However, I am willing to be wrong: go ahead, prove me wrong, FCC, disallow this proposed merger.